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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes 10 recommendations made by a select committee of Deans of Education from Alberta (Canada) universities for a model for preparing teachers in the province. Comments on the expected implications of each recommendation are provided. Recommendations were made in the areas of: (1) philosophy of teacher education; (2) entry requirements to faculties of education; (3) personal attributes of prospective teachers; (4) lengthening the program to five years of university education; (5) professional component of teacher education (two full academic years); (6) emphasis on the theory-practice relationship; (7) renewal of teacher certification every five years on the basis of successful performance in the classroom and professional development activities; (8) ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of teacher education programs at the universities; (9) province-wide coordination of teacher education; and (10) establishing a $10 million trust fund for applied research on teaching and learning. (JD)

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THE EDUCATION OF TEACHERS IN ALBERTA:

A MODEL FOR THE FUTURE

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SP024395

THE EDUCATION OF TEACHERS IN ALBERTA:

A MODEL FOR THE FUTURE

Executive Summary

In September, 1983, the Honourable David King invited the Deans of Education at Alberta universities to work with the Deputy Minister of Education in developing a model for preparing teachers in the province. The intention of this initiative was to take a significant step forward in enhancing both the professional qualifications and the performance of teachers.

Alberta has a record of being a leader in education in general and in teacher education in particular. At the same time, few would disagree that the quality of education in North America, including our province, has been under attack. Consequently, government has again demonstrated its leadership in education by initiating major reviews of the junior and senior high school programs and of the School Act. Comprehensive evaluation policies have been developed which will ensure regular and consistent evaluation of students, teachers, programs, schools, and school systems.

To complement these key activities it is essential to examine the current approach to teacher preparation in this province and to initiate action to help prepare teachers for both present and future challenges.

The attached report outlines a series of recommendations which are designed to provide the bold step that is needed. Taken together, the recommendations represent a commitment to excellence in the education of Alberta's teachers and, in turn, to excellence in formal education in general. The report describes a comprehensive policy designed to ensure that Alberta remains a leader in the education of teachers.

The following summarizes the recommendations included in the report and provides comments on the expected implications of each recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION	IMPLICATIONS
1. That those responsible for teacher education in the universities ensure that an overriding philosophy of teacher education is enunciated, including a description of the intended outcomes of each component and of the total program and, as well, provide for an evaluation of candidates to determine the extent to which these results have been achieved.	Clear objectives will be developed for teacher education programs, and the emphasis will be on how well these objectives are attained by these programs. Students will be evaluated on the basis of how well they meet the objectives of a program. A stronger sense of purpose and direction is expected.
2. That all candidates seeking admission to a teacher education program leading to initial certification must present either: a. a high school grade XII average of 70% or better in five grade 12 subjects, four of which must be examination subjects. English 30 (or a French equivalent at the 30 level) with a minimum of 70% must be included as one of the five; or b. at least three years of university course work with an overall grade point average of at least 2.5 on a four-point scale or 5.5 on a nine-point scale, and including proof of oral and written proficiency in English or French.	Experience and research have shown that selection of candidates for teacher education programs is a key variable in the eventual success of teachers. This recommendation will ensure that candidates admitted to the programs will have the necessary high academic qualifications. In the longer term, it will result in improvements to the teaching profession as a whole.
3. That selection procedures at the time of admission and screening activities during the early years of the pre-service program, should include identification of the personal attributes of a successful teacher, e.g., insight, curiosity and a critical mind, enthusiasm, imagination and creativity, maturity and judgment, and tolerance and understanding of others.	Recognizing that other factors are involved in producing an effective teacher, this recommendation will result in more screening of potential teachers on the basis of personal attributes. Taken together, Recommendations 2 and 3 should result in the careful selection and evaluation of candidates for the teaching profession.

RECOMMENDATION	IMPLICATIONS
4. That the program of teacher education require five years of university education, comprising: a. three years of general university education, including an area of concentration and basic/liberal education; and, b. two years of professional preparation, including thirteen weeks of practicum.	Current requirements are for four years of university education. This recommendation affirms the current professional component and strengthens the academic component in recognition of the growth of knowledge and the need to ensure that teachers have a firm basis of liberal education as well as an adequate understanding of their area of specialization. No cost implications are anticipated for the universities; however, there may be cost implications for school boards in terms of the current salary grid. Provisions would have to be included for upgrading the qualifications of current teachers.
5. That the professional component of preservice teacher education programs should be equivalent to two full academic years and should be built upon a core of courses common to all candidates which will enable them to acquire: a. a mastery of essential, beginning teaching skills; b. an understanding of teaching as a reflective, inquiring, intelligent act; c. a knowledge of the social, historical and ideological context of the school; d. an understanding of the profession of teaching and of professional ethics; e. a social consciousness and critical perspective leading to the questioning of traditional practices; f. a continuing interest in and pursuit of knowledge about teaching and learning; g. a knowledge of the curriculum and of the learner, as well as an understanding of the highly individualistic character of learning; h. an awareness of various instructional modes and an ability to incorporate modern technological advances into effective instructional design; i. an awareness of various techniques for evaluating student achievement and diagnosing learning abilities and disabilities, and an understanding of ways of adapting programs to meet students' needs; and, j. a sensitivity to, an understanding of, and a tolerance for unique human and cultural values.	This recommendation specifies the expectations for the professional aspect of teacher preparation programs. The professional component will be designed to ensure that teacher candidates meet these expectations, and the effectiveness of the programs will be evaluated against these criteria. The goal is to prepare teachers who are well-informed about society, our knowledge inheritance and the context of the school; who possess effective teaching, learning, and communications skills; and who are able and inclined to use these in teaching others.

RECOMMENDATION	IMPLICATIONS
6. That the design and implementation of teacher education programs should emphasize the relationships between theory and practice in the following ways: a. Professors of education in universities should ensure that students master essential knowledge and that they understand applications of this knowledge to the act of teaching. b. The practicum should afford an arena where cooperating teachers model appropriate behavior and, equally important, help pre-service teachers to appreciate the interface between theory and practice.	This recommendation will result in a closer integration of theories about teaching and the actual practice of teaching. This approach will be the focus of the professional component and the practicum in particular.
7. a. That all teachers in Alberta undergo evaluation of their teaching effectiveness and professional development every five years; and that renewal of a teaching certificate be dependent upon the teacher's acquisition of a specified number of credit points for professional development by the time of each evaluation. b. That the Minister of Education establish the procedures to devise a fair and equitable system of evaluation.	This recommendation reflects the view that teachers, as professionals, should be required to demonstrate their effectiveness as teachers and to upgrade their skills and knowledge on a continual basis. It would apply to all certificated teachers, including those working as classroom teachers, as administrators, or as faculty members. The recommendation is consistent with the objectives of the teacher evaluation policy and the in-service support that will be provided in the budget. Although there may be cost implications, it is likely that these can be accommodated within current provisions for professional development activities provided by school boards and associations like the ATA and ASTA.

RECOMMENDATION	IMPLICATIONS
8. a. That the universities, in collaboration with representatives of the Department of Education, teachers, and school trustees, develop a plan for evaluating the effectiveness of Alberta teacher education programs in relation to both pre-service and life-long provisions; and, b. That a report be made to the Minister annually in a meeting with deans of education.	Recognizing that teaching is a dynamic profession and that there is little conclusive research on the most effective approach to preparing teachers, teacher preparation programs should be evaluated continually. This will ensure that the objectives of the program are met and that changes in university programs are made as required. By linking the parties in the evaluation process, this approach will ensure that the Minister of Education will have a closer liaison with deans of education and may provide an alternative mechanism for performing some of the functions of the Board of Teacher Education and Certification.
9. That the four university faculties which are responsible for teacher education prepare and periodically revise a plan for province-wide coordination in teacher education. This plan should address specifically the avoidance of unnecessary duplication in the provision of specialist training, and should refer to the role of the colleges in the education of teachers.	Given the current limitations on resources, it may no longer be feasible for each faculty of education to provide specialist training in all areas. Additionally, the requirements for continual professional development may place added responsibilities on the universities and colleges across the province. This approach would require the universities to be responsible for coordinating their programs.
10. That the Minister of Education establish a trust fund, in the order of ten million dollars, the interest to be used to defray the cost of research and development for the refinement and advancement of the education of teachers.	The focal point of all education is the interaction of teachers and students. Without excellent teachers, the goal of high quality education cannot be achieved. At present, there are no independent sources of funding for research on problems such as ways of improving teacher effectiveness, applications of technology and software developments in education, second language instruction, and general strategies of teaching and learning. Establishment of such a fund would provide support for a broad range of applied research designed to improve teaching and the education of children in the province. Administratively, it could be based on the model developed for funding medical and nursing research.

PREAMBLE

Recently, the Department of Education has taken a number of steps to foster improvements of formal education for Albertans. Complementing these actions are some proposed measures pertaining to teacher education. The intent of these measures is to advance the professional qualifications and performance of teachers. Few would disagree with the observation that the quality of education across North America, including our province, has been under attack. It is relatively easy in such a period of criticism and negative comment to lose sight of the fact that our history provides readily apparent evidence of earlier advances and achievements.

Alberta has a record of being a leader in teacher education. This was the first province to place teacher education solely within the university context and, later, to require a minimum of four years of university education before certification. A leadership role in teacher education has also been apparent in graduate services for teachers; our universities have developed programs recognized and used by teachers and administrators from all parts of Canada and many other countries. Given the conditions of the times we cannot afford to rest on these accomplishments. Instead, we must recognize the need for another major surge forward, for another instance of leadership in the education of teachers. The Department of Education, the universities, the professional organization of teachers and the school trustees share the commitment to improve the qualifications and performance of those responsible for the formal education of our citizens.

The Challenge

Unfortunately, the past is not without blemishes or retrograde policies relative to the preparation and certification of teachers. There have been times when teacher shortages, precipitated by burgeoning school-age numbers or by adult involvement in wartime causes, have necessitated special arrangements to provide a teacher for every classroom. As necessary as it was over the first sixty years of our history as a province to sustain regulations which made it possible for teachers to enter the

classroom without completing high school or gaining much of a professional or general education, the memory of these policies continues to impede our progress toward higher levels of teacher preparation, qualification and performance. Many of these early teachers were capable and successful in large measure because their professional commitment led them to continue their training for years after initial certification. Some would have us believe that if lower levels of education were sufficient for success in earlier times, little more is needed today. Others are wont to deprecate the contribution of teachers, on the basis of observations on the performance of some individuals pressed, inappropriately but perhaps necessarily, into classroom service during a time of undersupply. The lowering of standards through reducing entrance requirements or shortening the period of training would have far more serious consequences if adopted today. In fact, it is essential to oppose any policies, contemporary or future, which would undermine standards of excellence in teaching and in teacher preparation.

The needs of our time are readily apparent. We need teachers in our classrooms who are willing and able to face an inordinately heavy and diverse array of challenges. Weighing upon them and their students are the burdens of remarkable technological advances, of knowledge expansion, and of changes in social conditions and values. Students of widely varying ability, interest, family circumstance, personality and character appear at school, demanding educational services. Teacher education has been adjusted and adapted to meet these conditions; however, as the clientele and society change, seemingly at exponential rates, the developments in teacher education are no longer keeping pace. Teachers, generally, are better qualified than ever before in our history. But, whatever the relative status of contemporary teachers as compared to their counterparts of a previous time, the prodigious requirements of teaching in the 1980s and 1990s necessitate the introduction of provisions for teacher education suitable to the new era. If our future educators are to be equal to the task of playing a vital role in maintaining and ensuring the quality of human existence in our society, bold and courageous steps must be taken now to help teachers anticipate and prepare for this challenge.

The Proposal

The overall policy proposed for immediate implementation builds, where appropriate, upon knowledge and past experience, thereby reducing the risk of adopting measures which might undermine sound elements in existing teacher education programs. At the same time, some new practices and activities are introduced. Difficult as it may be to chart a certain course of change, failure to embark on such a venture is likely to ensure that our practices in teacher education will become outmoded, perhaps even anachronistic. Minor adjustment and tinkering will not suffice; the time is right for decisive, bold leadership in an area where earlier actions of this province have paved the way for significant developments.

Reform in teacher education and teacher certification can contribute to the improvement of education. Alone, however, such changes cannot achieve the desired upgrading of the quality of formal learning in our schools. In the main, the best candidates for teaching careers are not being attracted or retained. Thus, effort must be expended, coincident with these reforms in programs and requirements, to improve the image of teaching and the circumstances of employment. Addressing the importance of teacher education, and providing an obvious and visible impetus to enhancing preparation programs, constitutes an important step. While the Alberta Department of Education is introducing a series of reforms affecting all spheres of education, other partners in education — particularly the universities, teachers and trustees — must sense the need for revitalization and work both independently and cooperatively to extend educational reform.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Program Philosophy

As teacher education has grown in a university context, the elements of programs have tended to reflect the interests of particular departments or disciplines; the programs which resulted have sometimes been collections of courses chosen without reference to a unifying view of teacher education. The assumption that such a collection of courses constitutes a valid approach to teacher education must be challenged. While there should be room for student choice and exploration, especially in the general education component, there are particular outcomes which can be achieved only through a core of courses required of all candidates. The elements of this core should be interrelated in a program which is cohesive and adaptable to changing conditions. The outcomes of the program should be demonstrable in the performance of students.

> Recommendation 1:
>
> That those responsible for teacher education in the universities ensure that an overriding philosophy of teacher education is enunciated, including a description of the intended outcomes of each component and of the total program and, as well, provide for an evaluation of candidates to determine the extent to which these results have been achieved.

Admission and Selection

Experience and research show that selection of candidates for teacher education programs is a key variable in the eventual success of teachers. Teaching requires intelligent judgment and precision of expression as well as an interest in learning and knowledge acquisition. Such an observation is not intended to deprecate other important dimensions of teacher performance and qualifications but, instead, to highlight the need for candidates who are able to use language proficiently and who are capable of an appropriate level of academic achievement.

Recommendation 2:

That all candidates seeking admission to a teacher education program leading to initial certification must present either:

a. a high school grade XII average of 70% or better in five grade 12 subjects, four of which must be examination subjects. English 30 (or a French equivalent at the 30 level) with a minimum of 70% must be included as one of the five; or

b. at least three years of university course work with an overall grade point average of at least 2.5 on a four-point scale or 5.5 on a nine-point scale, and including proof of oral and written proficiency in English or French.

In recognition of the importance of personal qualities to teaching success, evidence of these should also be sought.

Recommendation 3:

That selection procedures at the time of admission and screening activities during the early years of the pre-service program, should include identification of the personal attributes of a successful teacher, e.g., insight, curiosity and a critical mind, enthusiasm, imagination and creativity, maturity and judgment, and tolerance and understanding of others.

Program Leading to Initial Certification

1. Structure

In the short period of time since the requirement for initial certification was raised to that of a four-year B.Ed. degree or its equivalent, the number of teachers choosing to exceed the minimum has increased dramatically. Approximately 50% of the teachers in the two largest school jurisdictions in Alberta have at least five years of university education. The growth of knowledge and the need for teachers to have both a broad education in liberal arts and a specialization for teaching to complement their basic professional knowledge warrants reconsideration of the minimum requirement for

certification. Teachers must be well-educated, knowledgeable to teach in more than one subject area, and grounded in basic teaching skills and critical scholarship.

Recommendation 4:

That the program of teacher education require five years of university education, comprising:

a. three years of general university education, including an area of concentration and basic/liberal education; and,

b. two years of professional preparation, including thirteen weeks of practicum.

2. Professional Component of the Program

In recent years the curricula of teacher education programs have ranged from those which allowed students extensive choice to others with numerous specified learning objectives. Emerging from these variations is the recognition of the importance of professional content, general studies and the practicum in teacher education. These three components should characterize teacher education programs in Alberta. We should strive to prepare teachers who are well-informed about society, our knowledge inheritance and the context of the school; who possess effective teaching, learning and communication skills; and who are able and inclined to use these in teaching others.

Recommendation 5:

That the professional component of pre-service teacher education programs should be equivalent to two full academic years and should be built upon a core of courses common to all candidates which will enable them to acquire:

a. a mastery of essential, beginning teaching skills;

b. an understanding of teaching as a reflective, inquiring, intelligent act;

c. a knowledge of the social, historical and ideological context of the school;

d. an understanding of the profession of teaching and of professional ethics;

e. a social consciousness and critical perspective leading to the questioning of traditional practices;

f. a continuing interest in and pursuit of knowledge about teaching and learning;

g. a knowledge of the curriculum and of the learner, as well as an understanding of the highly individualistic character of learning;

h. an awareness of various instructional modes and an ability to incorporate modern technological advances into effective instructional design;

i. an awareness of various techniques for evaluating student achievement and diagnosing learning abilities and disabilities, and an understanding of ways of adapting programs to meet students' needs; and,

j. a sensitivity to, an understanding of, and a tolerance for unique human and cultural values.

3. Theory and Practice

One of the main concerns voiced by students preparing to be teachers is that they experience difficulty in relating the content of their programs to the realities of the classroom. Students master the knowledge of their general studies courses, and their professional preparation, but claim an inability to grasp the necessary connection between this knowledge and teaching. Such attitudes and orientations provide cause for concern. Successful teaching requires individuals who have sound knowledge and skill, and who know how to review critically their own teaching performance to ensure a continual refinement and growth in effectiveness. Teacher education programs should be structured and presented in a way which will ensure appropriate linking and interrelating of knowledge gained through both formal study and practical experience. A constant interplay between theory and practice is essential in teacher education and in teaching; reflection on the act of teaching should be an essential outgrowth of classroom experiences both on campus and in schools.

Recommendation 6:

That the design and implementation of teacher education programs should emphasize the relationships between theory and practice in the following ways:

a. Professors of education in universities should ensure that students master essential knowledge and that they understand applications of this knowledge to the act of teaching.

b. The practicum should afford an arena where cooperating teachers model appropriate behavior and, equally important, help pre-service teachers to appreciate the interface between theory and practice.

Continuing Education of Teachers

The education and development of teachers should be viewed from a career perspective rather than as a process which is complete upon graduation from university. The career development progression shown in Figure 1 illustrates a planning framework which is based on the following premises:

1. that initiatives in teacher development can best be planned from a perspective which recognizes the needs and abilities of the teacher/learner at the various stages of a professional career;

2. that the responsibilities of faculties of education in teacher development are best understood in relation to the responsibilities of the profession, the organization employing teachers, and the university as a whole, in each stage of the process; and,

3. that pre-service programs and continuing professional education programs (including graduate programs) should contribute to an overall process of development of the professional teacher.

The education of teachers does not cease with the completion of pre-service preparation. The competent, successful teacher continues to learn and maintains a

high level of proficiency. To this end, teachers should be encouraged to engage in activities that provide for life-long education and professional growth. Changes are occurring so rapidly that we can no longer overlook the need for teachers to upgrade their knowledge and skills continually. This should be viewed as a condition of professional service (rather than as the basis for salary increments), thereby necessitating periodic evaluation to determine whether a teacher has maintained a level of competence commensurate with continuing certification.

Evaluation for re-certification should be required at regular intervals, and teaching certificates should be renewed only for those who provide evidence of their effective performance as teachers and have engaged in professional development activities. Teaching competence might be judged by a panel consisting of the teacher's principal or superintendent, the teacher's peers, and parents. One possible component of professional development could be participation as a cooperating teacher in the practicum. Other activities might include participation in education seminars and conventions, pedagogical research, university courses, and professional development days.

Recommendation 7:

a. That all teachers in Alberta undergo evaluation of their teaching effectiveness and professional development every five years; and that renewal of a teaching certificate be dependent upon the teacher's acquisition of a specified number of credit points for professional development by the time of each evaluation.

b. That the Minister of Education establish the procedures to devise a fair and equitable system of evaluation.

Leadership Tasks of the Faculties of Education

1. Evaluation of Teacher Education Programs

The Department of Education receives comments on the quality and adequacy of teacher performance from many sources, including parents and pupils, teachers, school administrators, school trustees and universities. Without reference to a

common set of expectations and an agreed upon means of collecting and evaluating data, there is little hope for consensus and significant improvement. In the current period of criticism there is no way of knowing whether or not we are speaking of recent graduates, graduates of specific programs, out-of-province teachers or elementary or secondary school teachers. Responsibility to the public demands a greater degree of agreement on the adequacy and appropriateness of our teacher education programs. To meet that responsibility, continual evaluation is essential.

Recommendation 8:

a. That the universities, in collaboration with representatives of the Department of Education, teachers, and school trustees, develop a plan for evaluating the effectiveness of Alberta teacher education programs in relation to both pre-service and life-long provisions; and,

b. That a report be made to the Minister annually in a meeting with deans of education.

2. Coordination of Specialized Courses

Conditions are changing markedly in the profession of teaching as well as in universities. Whereas in an earlier period our faculties of education prepared large numbers of teachers for an expanding job market, we now see a need for some contraction in numbers. At the same time, many areas of teaching require a greater degree of specialization; thus, there is a need to offer an increasing number of specialist programs. The only effective way to resolve the resulting resource dilemma is to increase cooperation among the four faculties of education, at least in regard to those specializations which must be maintained but which enroll few students. There is no reason to expect that all universities should offer preparation in all areas of teacher specialization.

Recommendation 9:

That the four university faculties which are responsible for teacher education prepare and periodically revise a plan for province-wide coordination in teacher education. This plan should address specifically the avoidance of unnecessary duplication in the provision of specialist training, and should refer to the role of the colleges in the education of teachers.

3. Research and Development in Teacher Education

The universities which provide teacher education must be allowed a measure of autonomy to develop preparation programs suited to their unique circumstances. To impose one common set of courses and program on all institutions would be to ignore sound educational principles and to deny the value of allowing for variations in the history, size, personnel and interrelationships of each university.

There is much to be learned in and about teacher education, not only in pre-service preparation, but also in the expanding areas of in-service and graduate education. Until educators can define the critical variables in effective teaching and teacher education, systems of education will be criticized for their inadequacy, students will not realize their potential, and the allocation of resources will be questioned. As part of the overall endeavor to improve teacher education, support should be provided to universities so that they, in conjunction with their professional and government colleagues, may experiment with and evaluate key variables at all levels of professional training.

Initially, studies should concentrate on relationships between modes of teaching, their theoretical basis, and practical experience. Encouragement should be given to trial program modifications to investigate the effect of admission standards, instructional techniques, role variations for faculty members and teachers in the practicum, and practicum-centered tests of curriculum and instruction principles. The readiness of faculties of education to propose pilot projects and to experiment with program modifications such as internship merit financial support.

Recommendation 10:

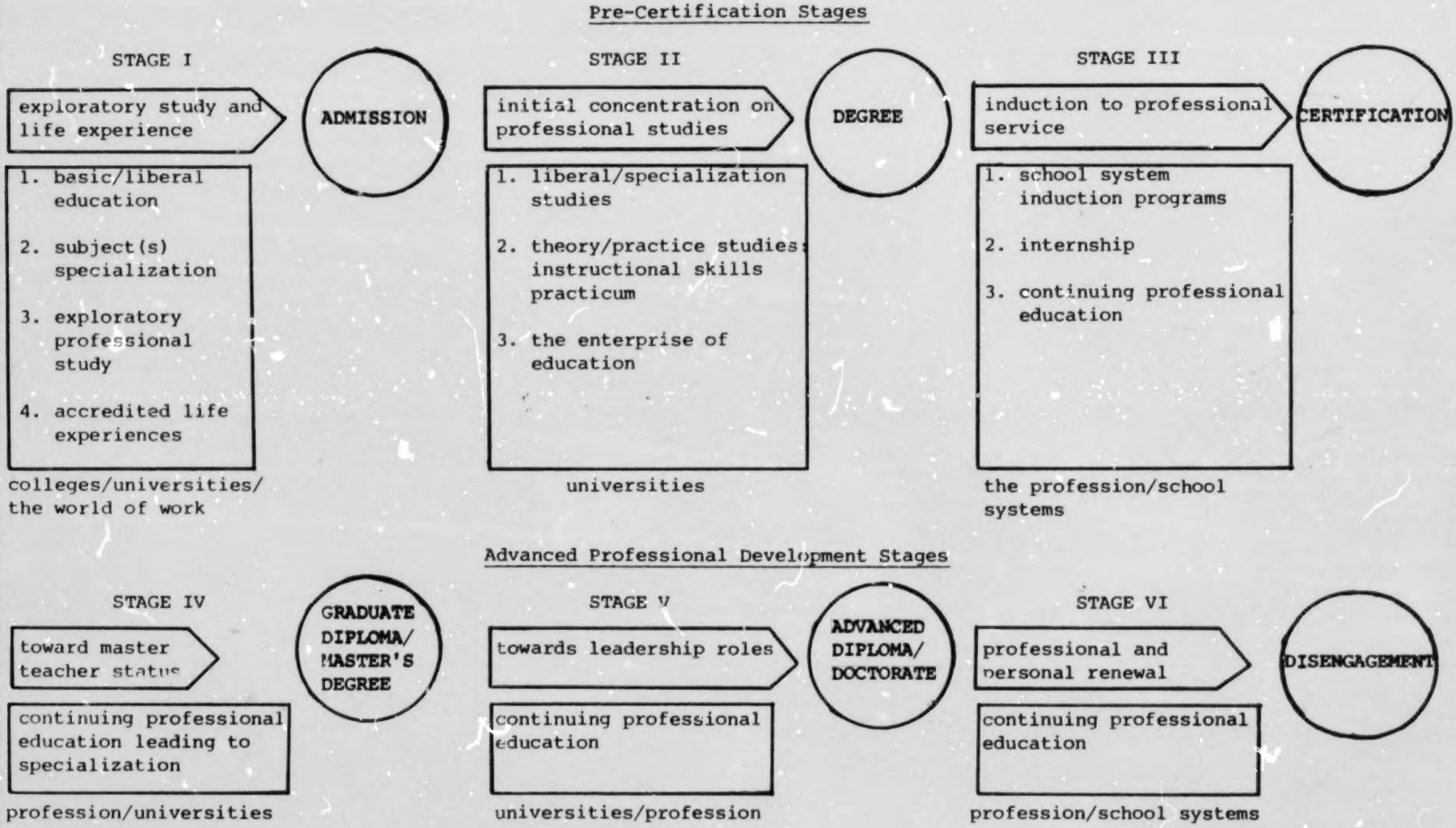
That the Minister of Education establish a trust fund, in the order of ten million dollars, the interest to be used to defray the cost of research and development for the refinement and advancement of the education of teachers.

Conclusion

This proposal suggests a dynamic model of teacher education to address future needs through the establishment of policies, structures, and procedures which are based on cooperative planning. The intent of the model is to ensure continuous interaction between the Minister and the faculties of education in the mutual pursuit of excellence in education.

FIGURE 1

CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN EDUCATION



Taken from "Planning Teacher Development from a Career Perspective" Anderson et al, October, 1982.